

*Observations on the present Aldbrough Church at  
Holdernefs, proving that it was not a Saxon Build-  
ing, as Mr. Somerset contends. In a Letter to the  
Rev. Mr. Norris, Secretary. By the Rev. Mr.  
Pegge.*

DEAR SIR,

**R**ELYING on the candour and benevolence of my good friend, John Charles Brooke, Esq. to put the best construction on the following observations respecting his memoir on the Saxon inscription in Aldbrough church, I have ventured to send it you. And indeed, as both he and I proceed upon the same ground and principle, the investigation of ancient truth, I may seem to have a fair claim to his indulgence, and an equitable demand to an impartial hearing at least.

THE inscription Mr. Somerset has produced is not of great antiquity, as he states, for Ulf, who first put it up, flourished but in the reign of king Edward the Confessor [a]. However, it is a Saxon inscription, and sufficiently both ancient and curious to merit the attention of our society. But the inference drawn from this concession, viz. that Aldbrough church, as now existing, is a fabric erected in the Saxon times, or before

[a] Archæologia, vol. VI. p. 43.

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the Norman conquest, appears to me to be liable to two very specious, not to say formidable objections.

FIRST, There was no church at Aldbrough when Domesday survey was made, the record being entirely silent as to that particular; and yet, I presume, all the churches then in being are there very punctually recited. It may be said, perhaps, in reply to this, that the church at Kirkdale, where a Saxon inscription also occurs, is not mentioned in Domesday Book [b]. I answer, that the fabric at Kirkdale cannot be expected to appear there, as it was not properly a church, *i. e.* a rectory endowed with tythes, but only a chapel of ease [c].

THE second objection is, that this structure does not present us with any resemblance of Saxon architecture, but on the contrary, every thing there favours of a post-normannic æra [d]. Mr. Brooke himself confesses 'it now has a more modern appearance;' but this he endeavours to account for, 'from the succession of repairs it has undergone, and the addition of windows very different from the original lights.' A suggestion which may be admitted in regard to this or that part of a church; but surely, Sir, can by no means suffice for a whole and entire building. The arches within, which can never be thought to have been altered or repaired, those of the windows, and that of the door way into the chancel, are all elliptic, a mode of building never seen, I believe, in any Saxon erection whatsoever. There is, it seems, some hewn stone work in the lower part of the south wall of the chancel, 'such, says Mr. Brooke, as was generally used in our most ancient cathedral

[b] *Archæologia*, vol. VI. p. 44. in note.

[c] *Ibid.* vol. V. p. 196. Br. Willis, *Survey of Cath.* vol. I. p. 211.

[d] See Mr. Brooke's Print of the building.

'churches.'

'churches [c].' A circumstance, which, in my opinion, militates very strongly in favour of the recent erection of this church, our cathedrals of this style of building being all posterior to the conquest. It is observed, again, that there is some zigzag work in the door of the chancel, and upon this some brass is lay'd, Mr. Brooke remarking in regard to this particular, 'that this was a stile peculiar to the Saxon architecture.' This now appears to be plausible; but it should be remembered on the other hand, that though our Saxon ancestors often applied this species of ornament, as here stated and alledged, yet we find the succeeding architects did not so totally forsake it, but that they sometimes retained it, witness the zigzag mouldings noticed by Mr. Denne [f], as occurring in post-norman-nic structures.

BUT now you will ask, how then do you reconcile this Saxon inscription, so positive and express, with the supposed recency, or post-norman-nic erection of this church? This, Sir, I acknowledge, is a difficulty not easily to be removed; and I, for my part, can only do it by a supposition, which you will think but barely possible; to wit, that Ulf built a church, which in a few years, and by some means now unknown, was destroyed and lay in ruins, A. 1080, when Domesday book was made: that when the present fabric was erected, the old stone with its inscription, which had happily been preserved, was put up in the new structure, and in the place it now occupies: and lastly, that in all probability, Odo earl of Champagne, Albemarle and Holderness, or his son Stephen, was the person who founded the present church [g]; if at last it was built so early.

[c] *Archæologia*, vol. VI. p. 41.

[f] *Ibid.* p. 388.

[g] *Ibid.* p. 45.

To detain you, Sir, no longer; Mr. Brooke's Paper, on which I have here so freely animadverted, is nevertheless a very valuable memoir, and we are much obliged to him for it. I shall only add, that the three crosses combined, in the area of the stone, may probably allude to the Trinity; and that possibly Ulf's original church might be consecrated to the Trinity, though the present fabric is sacred to St. Bartholomew. But this is thrown out as a mere random and superfluous conjecture. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

SAM. PEGGE



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